

estore pre-
icaba en el
iglo II, i por
ni no hoy?

God has given to us, I know well, the liberty of use, but only so far as necessity goes, and He has determined that the use should be common. And it is monstrous for one to live in luxury, while many are in want. How much more glorious is it to do good to many, than to live sumptuously! How much wiser to spend money on human beings, than on jewels and gold! How much more useful to acquire decorous friends,

Miguel
y
Banchero

Lifting Voices, Praising Gifts

Loida Martell-Otero

Psalm 72: On Confronting Rulers in Urban Society

Javier Quinonez-Ortiz

San Tom-
plor y
oliver

El Mensaje Apocalíptico de Pablo en Primera de Tesalonicenses como un Medio de Esperanza

1 y los
mujeres
Lambien

David Cortés Fuentes

In fine, they must accordingly utterly cast off ornaments as girls' gewgaws, rejecting adornment itself entirely. For they ought to be adorned within, and show the inner woman beautiful. For in

Reseña bibliográfica

Luis A. Pérez

Wherefore also only the virtuous man is really beautiful and good. And it is laid down as a dogma, that only the beautiful is good. And excellence alone appears through the beautiful body, and blossoms in the flesh, exhibiting the amiable comeliness of self-control, whenever the character like a beam of light shines forth. For the beauty of each plant and animal consists in its individual excellence. And the excellence of man is righteousness, and temperance, and manliness, and godliness. The beautiful man is, then, he who is just, temperate, and in a word, good, not less than rich. But now even the soldiers wish to be decked with gold, not having read that poetical saying:

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Reflexiones

teológicas

desde "With childish folly to the war he came,
Laden with store of gold."¹

i el
Antiguo?

By the love of ornament, which is far from caring for virtue, but claims the body for itself, when the love of the beautiful has changed to empty show, is to be utterly expelled.

margen

¹ *Iliad*, ii. 872.

hispano

Year 13, No. 3, Fall, 1993

Año 13, No. 3, Otoño, 1993

PRESENTACION

El tema que le da unidad al presente número de *Apuntes* es el de la necesidad de una nueva hermenéutica, y que esa hermenéutica se relacione con la situación de nuestro pueblo. En su artículo, la **Dra. Loida Martell-Otero** nos recuerda las voces olvidadas de nuestra historia, en particular las voces de la mujeres, y cómo tales voces pueden hacer una contribución notable a la interpretación de textos bíblicos, y a la vida toda de nuestras comunidades. Más adelante, **Javier Quiñones-Ortiz** hace una exégesis de un salmo en la que muestra que los salmos reales son claramente pertinentes a la condición de nuestras comunidades urbanas y su relación con los poderes de la ciudad. Pasando entonces al Nuevo Testamento, **David Cortés Fuentes** aclara el valor de la perspectiva y el lenguaje apocalípticos para una comunidad como la nuestra. Por último, **Luis Pérez** nos ofrece una reseña bibliográfica de un libro que ha marcado pauta en la tarea de mostrar cómo la doctrina del Espíritu Santo, particularmente desde una perspectiva pentecostal, es particularmente pertinente a nuestra situación.

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Lifting Voices, Praising Gifts

Loida Martell-Otero

There is a story by Oscar Wilde titled "The Nightingale and the Rose," about a young man, a poor student, who is brokenhearted because the young lady of his amorous desires refuses to dance with him unless he brings her a red rose. He is too poor to buy one, and there is none in the garden where he lives. A nightingale overhears his lament, and believing the young man to be the victim of true love, flies to each rosebush in the garden in search of a red rose. One bush has white roses, another yellow. But there are no red roses to be found. The rosebushes send the nightingale to a red rosebush under the young man's window, but it has no roses. The rosebush offers to produce a rose for the nightingale, but explains that it needs her heart's blood in order to do so.

The nightingale agrees to the exchange: her life for a red rose for the young man, that true love could find its way. That evening, the nightingale alights on the rosebush, and begins to sing as the bush's thorns pierce her chest. With each painful thrust, she sings sweetly of true love, about passion, about giving. And as a rosebud begins to emerge, the bush encourages to her press harder against the thorns. It needs the heartblood to produce a rose.

The young man, hearing the nightingale sing, scoffs at the bird, noting what vain little flighty creatures nightingales are, mocking the possibility that such mere creatures could understand the pain of profound and sensitive men such as himself. Surely, he thought, nightingales know nothing about true love.

The nightingale presses harder and harder against the thorns, until, finally, as they pierce her heart and she sings to love, a red rose blooms under the young man's window. The lifeless eyes of the nightingale never see the rose she helped create.

The young man, awakening the next morning to find the rose, grabs it from the bush and rushes joyfully to the home of this beloved. Triumphant, he offers the rose, even as he reminds her of her promise to dance with him. She disdainfully rejects both suitor and flower as she tells him of the gentleman caller who brought her jewels. The young man dejectedly walks away, throwing the rose to the ground, where it is immediately crushed by a wheel. Upon reaching his apartment, the student ridicules love, concludes that only REASON and LOGIC are valid, and turns to his dusty books.¹

Our churches today, indeed society today, are full of women like that nightingale: women who have given their all for the benefit of humankind. Brave,

1. Oscar Wilde, "El Ruiseñor y la Rosa," *Antología de Lecturas*, vol. II (Río Piedras, Puerto Rico: Editorial Universitaria, 1969), pp. 112-118.

faithful women who have endured much sacrifice and pain to create a better world for their families and communities. Unfortunately, as the young man, many either have not heard their voices, their songs, or have taken them for granted. As Gustavo Gutiérrez, a Latin American theologian, points out:

"We...are only now beginning to wake up to the unacceptable and inhuman character of [women's] situation. One thing that makes it very difficult is its hiddenness, for it has become habitual, part of everyday life and cultural tradition".²

In other words, "that's the way it is."

The voices of our women have not been lifted up. Their stories have been cast aside, crushed by the moments of history and the indifference of many who purport to record "historical fact." Their struggles and achievements have not been recognized or praised. Often, they have been ridiculed or minimized. Nonetheless, many of us know of many such women: each cultural, religious, linguistic, and ethnic group knows of such women. Some are recorded in books (women such as Mama Leo and Amy Garcia de Corteses come to mind), the majority are not.³ Some are educated, professionals, church leaders, barrier-breakers. Others, most, are not. Each one has achieved wonderful things in the name of the Lord they love and serve, no one knowing of the thorns that have pierced their hearts. You know who they are: the ones that always "volunteer," the ones who visit hospitals, cook, care, pray, hold vigils, clean, sustain, encourage, teach, evangelize, comfort, sing. The ones who serve as glue to help keep things together. (I can think of the many women in church I have met in Nicaragua, Puerto Rico and here in the United States. Others, such as Eva Conde, we do not forget because they are a part of the stories that we hear in our communities.)

For too long we have taken their efforts for granted. For too long, we have barely noticed if they have died. For too long, we have taken for granted their tears, their tired hands and hearts. For too long we have listened to different voices, voices which have become so familiar to our ears and hearts that we have barely discerned other voices-- such as those of our women. For too long, the "powers and principalities" which have led to the oppression and silencing of too many-- the poor, ethnic and linguistic minorities, children and women-- have held sway, have not allowed the silenced to speak.

When the prophet Elijah was in the cave, an embattled "minority" trying to be silenced by the dominant majority in power, I Kings tells us that he sought

2. Gustavo Gutiérrez, "Introduction," *A Theology of Liberation*, revised edition, translated and edited by Sister Claridad Inda and John Eagleson (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1988), pp. xxii.

3. see for example, Suzan D. Johnson, *Wise Women Bearing Gifts* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1988); and Virginia Sanchez Korrol, "In Search of Unconventional Women: Histories of Puerto Rican Women in Religious Vocations Before Mid-Century," *Oral History Review* 16 (Fall 1988) 2:47-63.

to hear God's Voice in the powerful winds, the raging fires and the awesome storms. Instead, the Hebrew nuances that he heard God's voice in a silence so great, the silence spoke.⁴ Today, we invite you to join us in a journey: a journey into a place where the silence is so great that we will hear the voices of those silenced for too long. To hear the voices of dead nightingales, their hearts pierced by the thorns of their oppression. To hear the voices of hope, strength, faith, and victory, even as the silence speaks of their stories.

We begin this journey as we quiet down, even silence, the familiar voices of the past. To silence them is not to reject them, not to condemn them. We silence them precisely because they have spoken long enough, they are familiar enough, and they have not allowed us to hear the **other** voices, especially the voices of women. What are some of those past, familiar voices?

Within the Church, such voices are the ones that make up our "theological discourse". When we speak about "theology" what we are basically referring to is "God talk." How we talk about, feel about, think about God. It is related to our faith: what do we believe about ourselves in relation to God.⁵ "Theological discourse" is talk about theology; or better still, "talk about God and us." It, in turn, is carried out with three voices: Scripture, tradition, and experience. Let me just mention a few passing things about these three familiar voices.

First, Scripture. This is what we often refer to as God's written Word. It is identified in our canon as both the Hebrew Scriptures (the Old Testament) and the New Testament.

It testifies to God's self-disclosure as witnessed to and interpreted by the people of God through music and poetry, prayers and liturgies, historical narratives, religious instruction, and preaching...As God's written word, it finds its foundational reference in Jesus Christ...and is confirmed by the power of the Holy Spirit.⁶

Scripture is the written record of God's inbreaking into human history. For many of our churches, it is the cornerstone of our faith; it is the basis of all that we do, preach and teach.

The second voice of our "God and us talk" is tradition. This is defined by Costas to be the process of transmission and preservation of the Church's faith, as well as the process of reformation and reconstruction of the church's mission.

4. Carol Fontaine, Andover Newton Theological School, 1986, personal communication.

5. Orlando E. Costas, *Liberating News: A Theology of Contextual Evangelization* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989), p.2

6. *Ibid.*, p. 4

It serves to clarify, expand and deepen the explicit teaching of Scripture.⁷ We are all products and agents of traditions. We become part of our ecclesiastical and denominational structures by learning why we are Baptists, or Methodists, or Presbyterians, or Pentecostals, so on and so forth. We have learned the particular beliefs that structure our faith system. We read Scripture a certain way, put our faith into practice a certain way because of what we have learned, what has been passed onto us. Our culture is part of that tradition. There are groups who totally eschew alcoholic beverages; there are others who incorporate wine into their liturgy. I was recently reading an article in the *New York Times* that explained that in some American Indian tribes, women hold egalitarian positions of authority/leadership with men; in other tribes, with different traditions, women hold no positions of authority. Different traditions, different voices.

Experience is the third voice of theological discourse: "The peculiar manner by which persons and communities enter into contact with faith and interpret it, and incorporate it into their own history."⁸

I could read every passage in Scripture that my tradition has taught me deals with salvation, but unless I experience Jesus Christ for myself, in my own life, it tends to be meaningless. The people of Israel experienced a liberation event in their lives, one that gave them an identity, a faith, a sense of God-in-the-midst-of-them. The experience was so powerful and so profound that all of Hebrew Scriptures point in some way to the Exodus. The followers of Jesus experienced a post-Easter event so powerful, so profound that all of the New Testament points to this man, Jesus, as the Risen Christ, God Incarnate in the midst of us.

These, then, are the three voices we have primarily heard: Scripture, tradition, and experience.⁹ A problem, however, arises when traditions and/or experiences become so intertwined with Scripture that they become indistinguishable from it. The Reformers grappled with this issue in the sixteenth century: "in their attempt to rediscover the biblical word, they found it obscured by its traditional interpretations."¹⁰ One becomes accustomed to hearing the Bible taught and preached a certain way. To question the **interpretation** becomes akin to questioning Scripture itself. For many of our churches, this is a blasphemous thing indeed! It is as difficult today as it was in the sixteenth century to reexamine and question generations of layers of tradition. When nontraditional

7. *Ibid.*, p. 5

8. *Ibid.*

9. A fourth voice oftentimes mentioned by some traditions is that of reason. Unfortunately, this voice, as defined by the particular historical biases of the Enlightenment period, has been used in illegitimate ways to silence the very voices we wish to lift today. My respect for things intellectual can be borne out by the very use of it in the presentation and preparation of this paper.

10. Justo L. González and Catherine G. González, *Liberation Preaching: The Pulpit and the Oppressed* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1980), p. 30.

persons read and interpret Scripture in nontraditional ways, they are branded "heretics." In Puerto Rico, we call people like that "*chuleteros*," "porkchoppers," carnal Christians.

Let me share an example with you:

On the road to Emmaus, we are told of two disciples headed to that city. Traditionally, as we read this text in Luke, we have envisioned two men. Even though the Greek grammar would seem to indicate that indeed both are men, the rules of grammar in Greek, as in Spanish, give words a masculine gender ending even if there are women in the group. (For example, in Spanish we would say, "Tengo tres **niños**, dos varones y una hembra." The word "niños" is a masculine ending, even though there are two boys and a girl.) It is interesting that the text identifies one of the persons by name, Cleopas. Could it be that, according to custom, the **man** is identified and his **woman** companion is not? Even though, traditionally, we have envisioned two men, there is room to consider the possibility that it may have been a man and a women. Hebrew custom would suggest that, in fact, it may have been a married couple! [Hint: Who prepared the meal?!]

Could we possibly do as the sixteenth century Reformers and hear those nontraditional voices to rediscover the Biblical word? Such voices have been silenced even as the voices of tradition have been raised.

Am I saying, then, that tradition is a bad thing? No! I am saying, however, that tradition and experience must be critiqued by God's Word. Mark 9:14-29 tells us the story of a young boy silenced and tormented by a demon. When the disciples are unable to cast it out, Jesus sets the boy free. The child can speak! The disciples then ask Jesus how he overcame the demon, and he responds: "This kind can only come out through prayer and fasting." When tradition is sacralized and experience idolized, they become demonized. It is only by the power of the Holy Spirit that we can be set free, to allow the silenced to speak. This can only be achieved through prayer and fasting.

Today I invite you to enter the journey, to declare a fast, not of food and drink; it is a different fast: a fast from your presuppositions, from your cultural and denominational biases, to lay at the feet of the Cross your arrogance and knowledge, and to allow God's Word to be liberated and to liberate. I invite you to strip yourself of the traditional, to hear a new Word from God.

You will hear silenced voices: you will hear viewpoints about women through Biblical exegesis, views that will surprise you, challenge you, and hopefully, move you. You will hear how history influenced our views about women. You will hear about the experiences of women. You will hear from the points of view of women. You will hear unfamiliar voices, which paradoxically may resonate as strangely familiar. **Both** men and women will speak today. One man, Gustavo Gutiérrez, notes:

A growing number of persons committed to the restoration of women's rights, even as we realize more and more clearly how intolerable the situation of women really is...the voices of these groups are beginning to be heard, and this development is promising.¹¹

And so we enter the journey today, to hear the unfamiliar voices in the silence. I began this presentation by saying that one of the steps to undertake this journey was to quiet down, even silence, the familiar, traditional voices of theological discourse; to enter into an ensuing silence that would allow us to hear, to discern the unfamiliar, the silenced voices. The second step in this journey is to invite God's Spirit to move in our midst.

The Holy Spirit is a "well-spring, the *ruach* (breath)" that gives life. Every divine movement-- from Creation to Consummation-- is associated with the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is the giver of life that makes all things new (II Cor 5:17). It is by the Spirit that humankind receives awareness of "other" and the ability to communicate or establish community.¹² When the Holy Spirit moves in the midst of human history, it creates human community. And wherever there are two or three, we find God's Presence and blessing. Two familiar passages will underscore this:

The first passage is the creation story in Genesis 1-3. Genesis 1:2 describes how God's Spirit-- the word used is "*ruach*" (wind or breath)-- swept over the face of a formless void, beginning a process of creation that culminated in the creation of a "ha-adam," literally "the adam," the earth creature, created from "ha-adamah," the earth. When we look at Genesis 1:26, we read that "God [*Elohim* in Hebrew, the Godhead in its plurality] said, Let us make the adam [*ha-adam*] in our image, according to our likeness..." The Spirit moved, and a formless void became a creation of beauty, color, with a community of birds, fish, cattle, creeping things, and the "ha-adam," both male and female. Further, it tells us that this community, inclusive, diverse, plural, somehow reflected God's image. Chapter two affirms and expands this. Again, we are told that there is a ha-adam, whom God decides needs a *neged 'ezer* in this community. Translated literally, the adam, the earth being, needed a helper, "as one in front of."¹³ The text never implies submission. What the text does indicate is that God's image is reflected in this community: of humankind in relationship with God, with creation and with each other, where man and woman stand together in relationship. Verse 22 and

11. Gutiérrez, p. xxii.

12. Costas, pp. 121-122.

13. Phyllis Trible, "Depatriarchalizing in Biblical Interpretation," *The Jewish Woman: New Perspectives*, edited by Elizabeth Kolton (New York: Schocken Books, 1976); also, refer to Aida Besancon Spencer, *Beyond the Curse* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1985); González, Justo L., "On Being Human," *Apuntes* 3 (Fall, 1983): 63-64.

following describe how God removes a rib from the adam and, by God's power and initiative, creates man and woman; for now the ha-adam, is called *Ish and Ishah*, man and woman. Man acquires his identity when the woman is formed. And so God's Spirit creates and inclusive community, and "God saw that it was good."

Sin, however, then comes into the world, and the relationships are broken. It is not until after the fall that the man names his wife Eve. God **never** gave him permission to name his wife (for to name was a sign of dominion), although God expressly allowed the adam to name the animals.¹⁴ The man's dominion over his wife is, thus, an act of sin. And the state of sin, the alienation from God, brings about the rupture of the relationship between man and woman, between humankind and creation. The community is disrupted. God's word of judgment (not a curse, as has been traditionally assumed) is then a pronouncement of the consequences of human sin: the struggle of power and dominion between the two who were supposed to be partners, the struggle of power and dominion between humanity and the creation it was supposed to enjoy. Costas affirms: "Where God is denied, judgment and its consequences are suffered: adversity, brokenness, and darkness".¹⁵

Yet, the story does not end there. Sown in the seeds of judgment is a promise of redemption. That promise is fulfilled in Jesus Christ, God Incarnate. Jesus came proclaiming that "the Reign of God is at hand."

Where God's reign is affirmed and his redemptive presence hoped for, salvation is experienced and peace anticipated.¹⁶

And, he continues: "The reverse side of judgment is God's liberating reign of peace".¹⁷

In Christ Jesus, the veil of separation is torn. God has come to declare God's sovereignty over God's people and God's earth. "For God so loved the **world**." Paul tells us that **all** of creation groans, awaiting its redemption (perhaps Paul heard a nightingale sing).

In Acts chapter two we again see the moving of God's Spirit. It is the Pentecost. This time the "ruach" descends as a violent wind, manifesting itself as

14. Biblical scholars would point out that the fact that Chapter 1 is the Priestly or Elohist version, and the fact that Chapter 2 is a Yahwist version would affect this interpretation of the Creation stories. I am, however, taking seriously the evangelical sensibilities of my audience. Further, some biblical scholars would argue that the "Ish/ Ishah" event is a "naming" of the woman by the man. To this I would point out that the Hebrew text makes a specific differentiation in the words "call" and "name." (Cf: Genesis 2:23 and Genesis 3:20). See Tribble, pp. 222, 224-225.

15. Costas, p. 36.

16. *Ibid*.

17. *Ibid*.

tongues of fire, enabling a diversity of people to speak and to understand each other. Peter gives his sermon, again expresses God's image, God's intent, God's moving in the midst of a diverse and inclusive community:

In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy... That everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. (Acts 2:17-18, 21)

It is no coincidence, I think, that in the same sermon Peter quotes, "I saw the Lord always before me..." (v.25)

The judgment at Eden is transformed into God's liberating reign. The Genesis passage tells us that God's **intention** for creation was that **we** be an inclusive community, in right and equal partnership with each other. Sin broke that relationship. Jesus died to heal that relationship, and that relationship is affirmed by God's re-creation: at Pentecost, a new community is created, one that again reflects God's Presence and God's image. A community of young and old, male and female, speaking and understanding, listening and loving, praying and fasting. "Behold! All things are made new." The silenced are given the gift of tongues.

What we are preaching and espousing today are not "women's issues." Rather, we are lifting our voices, to cry out that there is a message of salvation to **all** people, to the **whole** person. The Fall at creation has been overcome at the Cross of Calvary. The message of judgment has been overcome by God's message of peace (shalom) and reconciliation. Jesus Christ has broken the bonds of sin and death, and promised us **new life**.

The problem lies in that this wonderful "Good News," the "gospel," has been applied only to a select group, to be experienced only in the hereafter and for the benefit largely of the male population. But, as Justo L. and Catherine G. González so eloquently state, "There is only one Victor and there is only one Enemy".¹⁸

As such, they point out, there is only one oppression, and Christ died and rose to overcome it. Therefore, we cannot extend the Good News of salvation to a select and privileged few; it must be to **all** of humanity, **all** of creation. It is not just Adam's judgment which is lifted, redeemed, but Eve's as well. This is the Good News: "God reigns!" Jesus is Lord! And God's reign has concrete social and historical implications. The past voices have shown us these implications for men. Today, the silent voices lift up and joyfully sing of those implications for women,

18. González and González, p. 110.

for children, for the poor, for the oppressed, for the silenced and the forgotten.

And as their voices are lifted in song, may each and everyone of us experience Pentecost: a transformation, an empowering, and enabling to listen and understand. That we may be a **new community, an inclusive community** where we can look about and find that we are "in front of each other," helpers. Each of us a part of the "ha-adam," God's creation, God's image.

Let us lift up our voices and sing.

Resumen

Comenzando con el cuento de Oscar Wilde, «El ruiseñor y la rosa», este artículo trata sobre las voces olvidadas, que han cantado sin que nadie las escuche, y que hasta han dado la vida en pro de la humanidad, sin que se les dé crédito. En particular, el artículo se refiere a la voz de las mujeres, por tanto tiempo olvidadas en la tradición cristiana y en la interpretación de la Biblia.

A fin de mostrar esto, utiliza algunos ejemplos de interpretación bíblica en los que la voz de la mujer no se oye o se esconde. Por ejemplo, en el caso de los discípulos que van con el Señor cmaino a Emmaús, ¿cómo sabemos que ambos eran varones? Y en el caso de las historias de la creación en Génesis, la autora muestra que una exégesis distinta de la tradicional, pero fiel al texto bíblico, señala hacia una concepción del lugar de la mujer en la creación, y de su relación con el varón, muy diferente de la que la teología tradicional ha sacado de esos pasajes.

En breve, el artículo nos invita a hacer callar por un momento todas esas voces tradicionales que hemos oído, para escuchar lo que Dios tiene que decirnos a través de esas otras voces olvidadas de los pobres, los oprimidos, y en particular de las mujeres.

Psalm 72: On Confronting Rulers in Urban Society

Javier Quiñones-Ortiz

Introduction

A previous study published in the pages of this journal issued a call for an evangelical social spirituality to confront structures of evil present in our urban centers.¹ In this article Eldin Villafañe challenges the evangelical communities to go beyond mere individualistic "spiritual" struggles and wage a more wholistic spiritual war that corresponds "with the geography of evil --the sinful and evil structures of society."² Therefore, he adds, that "We must see that the texture of social living makes no easy distinctions between the personal and the social. The church's mission includes engaging in power encounters with sinful and evil structures."³ Although for many readers this claim might not sound particularly revelatory, one needs to be reminded that most of his assertions are rather radical and revelatory within most of the communities that Villafañe seems to have in mind. In fact, it is not uncommon to hear many saying that it is precisely some of these evangelical communities who contribute to the preservation of sinful structures of evil by preaching a "pie in the sky" theology.

Furthermore, as expected, Villafañe's challenge to the evangelical communities comes heavily couched in biblical theology, and it is insistent in developing a biblically consistent social spirituality.⁴ One presupposes that, although not explicitly stated in the article, this call for an evangelical social spirituality implies a "new" way of looking at Scripture. Yet, this is truly a particularly sensitive issue for the Hispanic evangelical worldview.

Perhaps, one of the most disregarded theological issues in such communities has to do with the inculturation of our biblical theology. In many ways our reading of Scripture continues to be an "innocent" one.⁵ It seems to me that it is essential for those communities engaged in the process of heeding the call verbalized by Villafañe to reevaluate the way Scripture is read and utilized as a source of power, vision, and life in their midst. This is specially true because these communities draw their sense of authority and inspiration exclusively or primarily from the Bible.

1. Cf. Eldin Villafañe, "An Evangelical Call to a Social Spirituality: Confronting Evil in Urban Society," *Apuntes*, Year 11, No. 2, Summer, 1991, pp. 27-38.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 37.

3. *Ibid.*

4. *Ibid.*

5. See Justo L. González, *Mañana: Christian Theology from a Hispanic Perspective* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991), pp. 75-100, for a more detailed exposition on this issue.

Hispanics, --evangelical or not-- are, by and large, urban dwellers.⁶ Accordingly, one can see how important it is for the Hispanic Christian *traditions* to reappropriate those biblical resources that can sustain and further develop prophetic ministries in our society. Just as, sociologically speaking, we stand in serious need of political keenness; theologically, our reading of Scripture ought not to continue to reflect cultural or political *naïveté*. As long as we continue to read the Bible with so-called objective and neutral eyes, we shall be condemned to preach a candy-coated gospel, which, consciously or not, will lend further support to those socio-political structures that continue to oppress us in this society. Since these structures are established, supported and preserved by the rulers of this country --whether we are talking about Democrats or Republicans, the President, Congress or the Senate, it really makes no difference whatsoever--, it is imperative for Hispanic ecclesial communities to reread the Bible paying particular attention to those passages that could help us issue a prophetic call for true governmental and legislative justice.

Such a call, however, involves a number of issues, of which I would like but to emphasize two. First is the issue of political empowerment. One does not have to be an expert sociologist of religion to realize that our communities stand in serious need of social, economic and political empowerment. A most important aspect of this process of empowerment consist of developing the motivation and political wisdom to confront evil as experienced through the present political power structures. This is certainly an integral part of our Christian identity or mission. We should, then, evaluate, live and communicate the resources that Scripture provides for this essential matter.

Secondly, this confrontation process, as mentioned before, ought to directly engage those who embody the political power structures, i.e., our political rulers. Villafañe himself quotes Jim Wallis to the effect that: "The church demonstrates Christ's victory over the powers by reminding them of their created role as servants, rebuking them in their idolatrous role as rulers, and resisting them in their totalitarian claims and purposes . . ."⁷

On the other hand, any critique of the effectiveness and role of the North American legislators, and its accompanying legal system, is very commonly perceived as anti-Americanism. As it is usual with those who benefit the most from the preservation of the status quo, any word of criticism of it causes alarm and suspicion. This is a most emotional issue in many Hispanic ecclesial

6. Two important Hispanic contributions on urban ministry come from Harold Recino's work. Cf. *Hear the Cry!: A Latino Pastor Challenges the Church* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989), and *And Who is My Neighbor: Global Encounter in the City* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1992).

7. *Op. cit.*

communities.⁸ Yet, the biblical tradition itself, as Villafañe showed, calls and offers us with valuable resources for such a task.

With this background in mind, I would like to engage in a study of one of the royal psalms, i.e., Psalm 72.⁹ This text was probably utilized in a coronation ritual. It is surprising that this literature survived the onslaught of negative press the monarchy got by the deuteronomistic historian(s). Perhaps that is one of the reasons why it acquired messianic features so quickly. As such it provides pertinent and relevant information on the Hebrew perception of the role, function, and scope of the human ruler in relation to God and the community of Israel. Yet, it also does have much to tell us about responsible socio-political relations, the concerns that should inform most of our socio-political decisions, as well as the background for reevaluating some aspects of our ecclesiastical socio-political role as oppressed members of this society.

Therefore, the present reflection has a twofold purpose: first, it seeks to apply the theological principles expressed in Villafañe's article to a biblical interpretation of Psalm 72, and secondly, through that application itself, to offer an example of an alternative model of a biblical interpretation that responds to Villafañe's challenge and which I consider more appropriate to our Hispanic context.

The Text in Its Context

Although verse 16 seems to be the main source of textual difficulty in this Psalm,¹⁰ most translations reflect emendations from the LXX because there are some sections in the MT that either are, or seem to be, unintelligible.¹¹ Having this in mind, I have utilized both, the Revised Standard Version (hereafter RSV) and the Biblia Stuttgartensia, as the textual sources for this work. It lies beyond the scope of this work, and my capabilities, to resolve the textual problems that lie behind the emendations reflected in the RSV and other translations.

8. I have two specific communities in mind, i.e., the Cuban and the Puerto Rican. In most of the churches where these two groups are in the majority, most forms of social work, or political manifestations, are seen as activities not appropriate for the churches to be involved in. It is not uncommon to hear people say that "los cristianos no deberían involucrase en la política," (Christians should not be involved in politics) or that "esos son problemas que el gobierno debe resolver, no la iglesia," (those are problems for the government to solve, not the church). Also, any preaching laden with socio-political illustrations or critical comments, is commonly perceived as Marxist or, at the very least, humanistic and not necessarily Christian. The socio-political and religious history of these two communities has much to do with these reactionary tendencies present in their thinking and practice.

9. These include Psalms 2, 18, 20-21, 45, 101, 110, and 132.

10. See, e.g.: Reginald C. Fuller, Leonard Johnston, and Conleth Kearns, *A New Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture* (Nashville: Nelson, 1975), p. 467; Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms II* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1981), p. 183.

11. Cf., e.g., the comments in Fuller, *et. al.*, *ibid.*, p. 466-67.

According to Miller,¹² the basic outline of the psalm would be as follows:

Verses 1-7 - Prayer for justice/righteousness and well being

Verses 8-14 - Prayer for world-wide dominion

Verses 15-17 - Thematic recapitulation

Verses 18-19 - Praise of the Lord

Psalm 72 is the last psalm of the second book in the Psalms. According to the triennial lectionary cycle theory for the arrangement of the Psalms,¹³ we note that "the benediction and conclusion to the second book of psalms (Ps 72:18-20) has been compared to references in the final chapter of Exodus with which it would have been associated in the triennial cycle. The prayer, "May his glory fill the whole earth (Ps 72:19) can be compared with the statement of Ex 40:34, "and the glory of Yahweh filled the tabernacles," and the words of EX 40:33, "and Moses finished the work" can be compared with "The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended" (Ps 72:20). In the triennial cycle, both Ex 40 and Ps 72 would have been read on the final sabbath at the end of the Jewish year terminating in the Fall and therefore just prior to the great autumn New Year's day."¹⁴

This text could also very well be, as Gerald H. Wilson contends, a theological "signpost" in the Psalter.¹⁵ According to Wilson's theory, Psalm 72 would function, not only as the ending for the second "seam" of the Psalter, but also as a theological shift within it that shows how the blessings of the covenant are extended to the descendants of David and the people.

It is also important to note that the doxology in verses 18-19, according to Jenni, had other functions besides dividing the Psalter.¹⁶ Jenni argues that there are two additional functions, one is to follow a *baruk* formula, the other one is to respond to a work or uttering from God. Neither of them would have originated in the cult, but rather, in the everyday life of the people.

12. Cf. P. D. Miller, Jr., "Power, Justice, and Peace: An Exegesis of Psalm 72," *Faith and Mission* 4, No 1, Fall 1986, 65-70. Different ways of dividing this text are represented in: John H. Hayes, *Understanding the Psalms* (Valley Forge, Pennsylvania: Judson Press, 1981), 103; Moses Buttenwieser, *The Psalms* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1938), 779; and Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and Roland E. Murphy *The Jerome Biblical Commentary* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968), 588.

13. Perhaps best represented and espoused by the work of John H. Hayes. Cf. "The Psalms and the Triennial Lectionary Cycle," Unpublished Manuscript.

14. *Ibid.*, 11.

15. See: Gerald H. Wilson, "The Use of Royal Psalms at the 'Seams' of the Hebrew Psalter," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 35 (1986) 85-94.

16. Ernst Jenni, "Zu den doxologischen Schlussformeln des Psalters," *Theologische Zeitschrift* 40 (1984) 114-120.

Verses 1-7 - Prayer for Justice/Righteousness and Well Being

The title of this text is very simple: "Of/for Solomon." It would be very difficult to assert, solely on the basis of archaic language, as Dahood does, that "this prayer may well have been composed by a functionary of the Solomonic court."¹⁷ We could just as well argue that "the description of the kingdom in vv 8-11 takes Solomon's empire as a symbol of the messianic kingdom, and thus gives rise to the simple title: 'Solomon.'"¹⁸

I still think that the bulk of this text is of pre-exilic origin. Its chief concern and purpose are related to the king.¹⁹ Psalm 72 is, organically and thematically, definitely related to the cult. It would not have made too much sense to compose such a text during the exile, and certainly not afterwards.²⁰

The very first verse of this text sets the tone for what follows. The prayer begins by asking God, the ultimate source of justice/righteousness,²¹ to give the king "thy judgments."²² Justice, the divine gift that enables the king to administer the kingdom with special care and concern for the poor (v. 2),²³ is one of the most important ideal royal traits in the Bible.²⁴ It is this trait that could enable the king to receive the universal recognition ascribed to him in this text. This idea of the just administration of the king is expected to affect all aspects of the

17. Dahood, *Op.Cit.*, pp. 179-180.

18. Fuller, *Op.Cit.*, p. 466.

19. See: Dahood, *Op. Cit.*; David Noel Freedman, "Divine Names and Titles in Early Hebrew Poetry," in F. M. Cross, W. E. Lembke, and P. D. Miller, eds. *Magnalia Dei: The Mighty Acts of God: Essays on the Bible and Archaeology in Memory of G. Ernest Wright* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1976); M. O'Connor, *Hebrew Verse Structure* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1980), p. 164.

20. Although it could be argued that the alleged messianic overtones reflect a late composition, I would still argue that too much weight is given to the role and function of messianism in the Hebrew Scriptures. For an excellent argument against the early dating of this psalm, on the basis of the messianic overtones contained in it, see: Joachim Becker *Messianic Expectations in the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980); also, Buitenvieser, *Op.Cit.*, p. 782-783.

21. It is important and necessary to mention that the "normal" usage of justice, righteousness, righteous, do not represent the richness of *sedeq* and *dikaiousune*. On this very important issue see: John W. Olley, "'Righteousness' -Some Issues in Old Testament Translation into English," *The Bible Translator* 38 (1987) 307-15. Also, see the appropriate entries in Benjamin Davidson, *The Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, Pu. House, 1976); Ludwig Koehler, William Baumgartner, eds., *Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1985); F. Brown, S.R. Driver, Charles A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978).

22. I prefer the MT reading, "thy judgments", over the Greek and Syriac reading, "thy justice", represented in the RSV. Although there are no radical differences in the resulting translations, since the petition for "thy judgments" encompasses the notion of receiving justice as a divine gift of grace.

23. On the connection between the notion of justice and the poor in the Hebrew Scriptures, see: Norman H. Snaith, *The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament* (London: Epworth Press, 1983), pp. 68ff.

24. See: A. Ahuviah, "'Behold, A King will Reign in Righteousness' -A Study of the Royal Ideal According to the Criterion of Reality," *Beth Mikra* 29 (1983/84) 29-36.

kingdom, i.e., law; wisdom; nature/fertility; war/victory; cult/sacrifice; and kingship.²⁵ All this process is effected through the righteous judgments of the king and his descendants. The ideal of a just king or ruler was very common throughout antiquity, yet according to Deuteronomy 17:14-20, humility was expected of the ruler of the nation. This ideal was unique to Israel.²⁶ In later traditions, humility came to be expected of Israel's future king (cf. Zechariah 9:9-10).

In verse 2 we encounter the first requirement of the king. In the process of establishing a sound social order in his administration, and in light of the petition expressed in the previous verse, the king is to rule justly. Of special concern for the king should be the plight and the condition of the poor in the midst of his people. The truthfulness of his administration is judged by his way of dealing justice to those with the greatest need for it.²⁷ "As the defender of justice, the king bore a special obligation for the defense of the poor and needy against those who would oppress them."²⁸

On verse 3 this prayer reflects a common metaphor in which the mountains "bear" gifts to a favored recipient at the petition of a divine agency.²⁹ This metaphor from nature, expresses the deep desire for *shalom* (a prosperous peace). Patrick D. Miller, correctly tells us that:

This conjunction of peace and righteousness is fundamental to the whole intention of the prayer. . . The prayer for prosperity and well-being, for peace and security for land and people, is echoed in the prayer for righteousness and justice. Here at least --and it is the powerful word of the psalm-- they are not conceived of apart from each other. Prosperity and well-being depend upon the maintenance of righteousness and justice by the human ruler.³⁰

25. Olley, *Op.Cit.*

26. Ahuviah, *Op.Cit.*

27. "The king, who is to administer Yahweh's law in Israel (v. I), is judged precisely by whether he intervenes on behalf of those who are most in need of help. *Either the king is the king of the weakest, or he is no true king in Israel* (emphasis added). Hans Walter Wolff, *Anthropology of the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981) p. 197.

28. Hayes, *Psalms, Op.Cit.*, p. 103.

29. Informed by the work of N.M. Waldman, Alviero Niccacci, O.F.M., sees in this verse a prime example of this metaphor at work. He concludes that "con paralleli mesopotamici alcuni testi della Bibbia che alludono alle ricchezze delle montagne e del mare: vegetazione (Ez 17,23; 36,8; Sal 72,16), metalli (Deut 8,9) e altri beni (Gioe 4,18; Am 9,13; Sal 72,3; Deut 33,15; 5,19). Cf. Alviero Niccacci, O.F.M., "I monti portino pace al popolo' (Sal 72,3)," *Antoniano* 56 (1981) 804-6.

30. Miller, *Op.Cit.*, p. 67.

This psalm gives expression to the well known saying that there cannot be peace and prosperity where there is no justice. To the extent that this prayer might have been a sort of ancient petitionary prayer "it sets justice alongside peace as the primary items on the national agenda and the ruler's job description."³¹ This *shalom* that is asked from the administration of the king "cannot be seen to exist where the cause of the poor is undefended and oppressive conditions and acts are allowed to exist."³²

The fourth verse offers a concrete description of the just judgments asked of God through the king. "May he defend the cause of the poor of the people, give deliverance to the needy, and crush the oppressor!" There is no doubt as to what is required of the king and his people: a concrete and consistent commitment to the cause of the poor, as a means of creating and preserving a just community.

Verses 5-7 offer us a beautiful poetic description of the desire for the king to live and also of the beneficial effects of his reign. As noted by John H. Hayes, "the close association between the nation's well-being, health, and prosperity and the life and fate of the king appears throughout this psalm. Prayer is made for a long life for the king (v. 5) and for his reign to fall upon the nation like the showers and rain that fall upon the land, rejuvenating the crops (v. 6). Righteousness and peace, which are requested in verse 7, denote the existence of right conditions and the total well-being of the community."³³

Verses 8-14 - Prayer for world-wide dominion

The desire for world-wide dominion is expressed most clearly in verses 8-11. The remainder verses serve as a qualification of that petition.

This world-wide dominion is couched in a "flattering exaggeration" since it would have been impossible for the king of Israel to acquire and respond rightfully to such a socio-political reality.³⁴ Specially if one realizes the importance of the qualification expressed in the last two verses of this section. In connection with this section it is important to note that:

The mythological expressions "from sea to sea" and "from the River to the ends of the earth" are equivalent to saying the whole world. "The kings of Tarshish and of the isles" were the Mediterranean powers to the west, and Sheba and Seba were the spice --and incense-rich states of South Arabia to the east. Both mythological and historical-geographical references are employed

31. *Ibid.*

32. *Ibid.*, p. 67-8

33. Hayes, *Psalms, Op.Cit.*, p. 103.

34. See: D. Winton Thomas, ed., *Documents From Old Testament Times* (New York: Harper & Row, 1961), p. 14.

to give comprehensive expression to the universality of the dominion of the Davidic king.³⁵

There is an important socio-political observation to be made at this juncture, although we will see that verses 12-14 have a qualitative importance in this section of the psalm, the fact remains that the prayer reflects a very shrewd social, economic, and political wish, i.e., political submission and the accompanying payment of tributes. This could be seen as *the* sure and only way "to the top." As then, it is now, probably the prevailing view of socio-political relations. Yet, the most important activity of this world-wide monarchy ought to be the help of the weak and needy!³⁶ It is only in the context of a concrete commitment to the world-wide establishment of a just and compassionate rule, with special reference to the marginalized of the world, that the human ruler can be "the right" ruler.

. . .the "for" at the beginning of verse 12 grounds the universal dominion of the king in this ruler's willingness and power to demonstrate and manifest the righteousness of God in the care of the weak. . . And it is the *world* that is to be set right by the king's righteousness in behalf of God. The world-wide dominion is *because* ("for" -v.12) this king is totally committed to delivering the weak and the poor from violence and oppression, a helper for those who have no other helper.³⁷

Verses 15-17 - Thematic recapitulation

There are a number of things to be mentioned in this section. The notion of praying for the king is present in verse 15, yet, that is "a sentiment rare in the Psalter."³⁸ It would seem as if that would be a way of identifying the cause and duties of the ruler with the experience of the people. The king who asserts his dominion through commitment to the poor, needs continuous prayer and blessings in order to continue to be just.

There are clear allusions to fertility in the field and family in this section.

35. Hayes, *Psalms*, Op.Cit., pp. 103-4. See also, Brown, et.al., *Jerome*, pp. 588-89; Fuller, *Catholic*, p. 467. Of importance is also the fact that Ps. 72:5-8 follows an uncommon poetic/literary structure. Cf. John S. Kselman, "The ABCB Pattern: Further Examples," *Vetus testamentum* 32 (1982) 224-29. On the function of merism on verse 10, see: Joze Krasovec, "Merism-Polar Expression in Biblical Hebrew," *Biblica* 64 (1983) 231-239.

36. ". . .there is no other specific activity ascribed to or hoped for from the human ruler than justice for the weak or the poor. That is the function of the king in the kingdom of peace." Miller, *Op.Cit.*, p. 68.

37. *Ibid.* Cf. Heinrich Gross, "'Bei Ihm is Erlösung in Fülle.' Befreiung in den Psalmen," *Bibel und Kirche* 42 (1987) 104-8.

38. Fuller, *Catholic*, *Op.Cit.*, p. 467.

These are signs of the blessings of true *shalom*. A dominion over the kingdom given by God, that is blessed because the poor and needy are taken care of. Because the right conditions of living are present in justice, the people serve and love the ruler. This conditions of prosperity and peace show themselves in abundant human, animal, and plant life throughout the dominion.

Finally, verse 17 seems to have an allusion to Gen. 12:3. And, the fact that the desire is expressed in the same verse that "people may bless themselves by him," seems to point to the desire for all the people to recognize, participate, and be endowed with the dignity, humility, responsibilities and prerogatives of kingship.³⁹

Verses 18-19 - Praise of the Lord

Although I agree with the conclusion that these verses are a liturgical addition to the text, it is important to note the role it has within the text. The work, duties, and blessings described in the text are referred to as "wondrous things." This conviction and desire that God do the inconceivable, is based on the long held conviction that God will do precisely that for God's people, witness the history of God's acts in the history of Israel. The impossible work of God started in the Exodus continues to be reaffirmed in their midst and in their hopes.⁴⁰ In summary, only by the power and will of God can the righteous rule of the king be true to God's purpose and desire for Her/His people. This fact colors the eschatological trust of this psalm. The God of justice, the God of the poor and needy, bestows justice upon the human ruler and the community in order to establish a rule of peace and prosperity throughout God's dominion.

VI. Theological Reflection

There are at least two issues that I would like to raise about this text. It is obvious by the nature and scope of the text, that this is a very high ideal of the kind of relation that any person in a position of power ought to have with God, the people, and the created order. It reflects such a high ideal of justice and righteousness, that eventually people began associating this image of the just ruler with *the* final ruler of creation: the Messiah. This notion prepared the way for the Christian belief in Christ as the just ruler of God, as the creator of the Rule of God. Helmer Ringgren says to that effect that:

desde el principio mismo la iglesia cristiana interpretó estos salmos como profecías de Cristo, y hasta cierto punto la investigación moderna ha justificado esa interpretación. Se ha demostrado que la esperanza mesiánica en Israel surgió de la

39. On the developed recognition of these as the possession of every Israelite, see: James A. Fischer, C.M., "Everyone a King: A Study of the Psalms," *The Bible Today* 97 (Oct. 1978) 1683-9.

40. Cf. Dieter Grimm, "Jahweh-Elohim, der Gott Israels, del allein Wunder tut' (Ps 72,18). Ein Beitrag zur Vorstellung von Gott im Alten Testament," *Judaica* 35 (1979) 77-83.

idea del rey como gobernante enviado por Dios. Los salmos reales preparan el camino para la creencia cristiana en el Mesías, y forman así una parte importante y esencial de la historia de la revelación. En realidad, la creencia cristiana en Jesús como el Rey y Salvador mesiánico sería impensable e ininteligible aparte del fondo de la ideología real del Antiguo Testamento tal como se expresa en los salmos reales.⁴¹

Precisely because this type of psalm prepare the way for our current Christian belief in Christ as the ruler of God, this text stands over and against us calling us to be responsible administrators of the gifts of God bestowed upon us for God's sake. We are God's trusted creatures, called to administer our social, political, economical and natural environment in a sensitive and responsible way. This ought to be done with special attention to those who suffer more when such stewardship is not properly done.

This text provides us with a clear picture of what responsible dominion of our human and natural resources entail, specially for those in positions of power.⁴²

Resumen

Este artículo lleva el propósito de abundar sobre la propuesta de Eldin Villafañe en un artículo aparecido anteriormente en Apuntes. A la propuesta de que nuestra iglesia confronte más directamente las estructuras del mal en nuestra sociedad, Quiñones le añade la posibilidad de desarrollar una base bíblica para tal acción a partir del Salmo 72.

El artículo es esencialmente una exégesis detallada de ese salmo, con especial énfasis en lo que allí se requiere del rey, para que sea un gobernante justo y por tanto legítimo. A base de esos requisitos del rey, Quiñones sugiere que la comunidad urbana latina de hoy puede y debe exigir el mismo tipo de justicia de quienes detentan el poder.

41. Helmer Ringgreen, *La fe de los salmistas* (Buenos Aires: Editorial La Aurora, 1970) p. 157-58.

42. Cf. Ralph W. Klein, "Liberated Leadership: Masters and 'Lords' in Biblical Perspective," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 9 (1982) 282-290

El Mensaje Apocalíptico de Pablo en Primera de Tesalonicenses como un Medio de Esperanza

David Cortés Fuentes

La perspectiva apocalíptica ha sido considerada como una perspectiva escapista y alienante por muchas personas. Los más grandes intérpretes de mediados de siglo menospreciaban su importancia para la interpretación del Nuevo Testamento. Sin embargo, la religiosidad popular se sentía fascinada por el uso de símbolos y por la interpretación que sostenía que en la Biblia podemos encontrar un programa escatológico del fin del mundo. Según esta perspectiva la historia estaba prevista por Dios y la lectura e interpretación de los textos tenía la función de explicar su significado y cumplimiento en los diversos eventos del momento. Como resultado, la membresía de las iglesias hispanas se encontraba distraída en especulaciones y esperanzas alienadoras. Estas interpretaciones eximían a la comunidad de acciones concretas y compromiso con la sociedad que le rodeaba. Sin embargo, el mensaje apocalíptico de la iglesia primitiva tenía otras funciones. Un breve estudio del uso paulino del lenguaje apocalíptico puede servirnos a la iglesia latina para reevaluar nuestras posiciones y revisar nuestras ideas relacionadas con la utilidad de dicha perspectiva.

El mensaje apocalíptico de Pablo en la primera carta a los Tesalonicenses tiene dos funciones fundamentales. En primer lugar es un mensaje de motivación y esperanza. En segundo lugar, el mensaje invita a la comunidad de fieles a la acción significativa para la mutua edificación y la transformación de la sociedad en que viven. Sin embargo, esto no significa que el Apóstol estaba ajeno a las circunstancias difíciles por las cuales estaba pasando la Iglesia. La evidencia interna de la carta y la información recopilada por las ciencias arqueológicas, las ciencias sociales y el análisis retórico de la carta muestran que la situación de los cristianos en Tesalónica era muy difícil. 1 Tesalonicenses 4:13-5:11 es uno de los pasajes en los cuales este mensaje se puede observar más claramente.

Para entender mejor el mensaje de Pablo es bueno tener en cuenta la situación general en la cual la Iglesia se encontraba inmersa. La **comunidad** de la Iglesia de los Tesalonicenses estaba compuesta en su mayoría por cristianos venidos del mundo gentil y pagano (1:9). La ciudad de Tesalónica, situada a la cabeza del golfo de Termes, era el puerto principal para toda Macedonia en los tiempos romanos.¹ En los tiempos de Pablo, Tesalónica era una ciudad libre. Esto implica que contaba con cierta autonomía política y económica. Podía acuñar

1. R. Jewett, *The Thessalonian Correspondence: Pauline Rhetoric and Millenarian Piety* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986) pp 119-132. C. A. Wanamaker, *The Epistle to the Thessalonians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1990) pp 3-6. También, F. Bruce, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*. (WBC Voi. 45) (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1982) p xxii.

sus propias monedas, legislar sus propias leyes locales y administrar los asuntos jurídicos por medio de un gobierno local. También la ciudad estaba exento de la imposición de la presencia del ejército imperial.

La **población** de la ciudad era cosmopolita. Contaba con una amalgama de habitantes, en su mayoría griegos inmigrantes del sur, y los nativos de la región. También vivían en la ciudad antiguos soldados romanos e italianos libres. Es muy probable que una comunidad de judíos viviera en la ciudad así como vivían en todas las ciudades romanas. De cualquier manera la mayor parte de la membresía de la iglesia era de origen gentil.

El **ambiente religioso** de Tesalónica estaba plagado de politeísmo y superstición. La evidencia arqueológica y las inscripciones señalan hacia una serie de cultos de misterios que incluía los cultos a Dionisio, Serapis, y Cabirus como sus dioses más venerados.² Las inscripciones en las monedas muestran que el estado respaldaba los cultos dionisiacos y de Cabirus.

Durante el primer siglo de la era común, el culto de Cabirus había llegado a ser la actividad religiosa dominante de la ciudad.³ Tenía la aprobación y el patrocinio de la élite social o aristócratas, de los miembros más pudientes de la sociedad (los terratenientes y mercaderes) que eran responsables del gobierno diario de la ciudad. En aquella época era prácticamente imposible distinguir entre política y religión. Ambas cosas estaban íntimamente relacionadas. Esto es así porque la religión era una fuerza enorme para legitimar la posición de la clase dominante de la sociedad. En estas circunstancias, atacar el culto auspiciado por la autoridad se tomaba como traición a los valores y las instituciones civiles. Esto podía resultar fácilmente en violencia de parte de la gente. Honrando al dios y culto del imperio las masas mostraban su alianza. En Tesalónica, el nuevo culto cristiano, que rechazaba los reclamos y las prácticas de la religión civil, era visto como una provocación política. El creer que la era mesiánica había llegado fuera del dominio del imperio, que el Salvador estaba presente en la comunidad, y que el benefactor de los pobres no era otro que Jesucristo, era visto como un acto de traición.

Esto puede explicar el lenguaje de **persecución** que aparece en la carta a los Tesalonicenses. En la carta encontramos referencias a "persecución" (thlipsis 1:6; 3:3; 3:7), "aflicción" (anágkē 3:7),⁴ y "sufrimiento" (páschō 2:14 cf. 2 Tes 1:5). Esta "persecución" ha señalado la comunidad de Tesalónica desde el mismo momento de su conversión (1:6; 2:14). "Que esta persecución planteaba una

2. K. P. Donfried, "The Cults of Thessalonica and the Thessalonian Correspondence," *New Testament Studies* 31 (1985): 336-356

3. Jewett, *Thessalonian Correspondence* p 127: "Although infrequently mentioned in Thessalonian commentaries, the mystery cult of Cabirus was the most distinctive feature of Thessalonian religious life." Jewett dedica las páginas 127-131 a este culto en Tesalónica. En adelante seguiremos su presentación.

4. Otros ejemplos: Rom 13:5; 1 Cor 7:26; 7:37; 9:16; 2 Cor 6:4; 9:7; 12:10.

amenaza real para la congregación se muestra en el hecho que Pablo explica su envío de Timoteo como un esfuerzo para sostenerlos en esta crisis (3:1-5).⁵

Otra palabra utilizada en la carta es la poco común "inquietos" o "incomodar" en 1 Tes 3:3 (saínesthai) para expresar la preocupación de Pablo sobre sus reacciones.⁶ De hecho, en 3:4 Pablo añade: "Porque también cuando estábamos con ustedes les prevenimos que íbamos a padecer persecuciones [thlíbesthai], como ha acontecido y saben."

1 Tesalonicenses 4:13-18 nos habla sobre problemas relacionados con la muerte de algunos miembros de la comunidad. Por alguna razón, consideraban que la separación por la muerte sería permanente. Es en este contexto de clarificación ("no queremos que estén ignorantes" 4:13) y exhortación ("aliéntense unos a otros con estas palabras" 4:18) que Pablo fomenta su esperanza con lenguaje apocalíptico. La referencia a los muertos en 4:13 y siguientes bien puede ser una referencia a algunos cristianos tesalonicenses que han sufrido la muerte por causa de persecución.⁷

La **clase social** de los cristianos Tesalonicenses era de las más baja en la comunidad. El texto de 1 Tes 2:9-12 nos describe a Pablo trabajando "día y noche" para sostener su ministerio con el propósito de no ser carga a ninguno de ellos. El que en 1 Tes 4:11 Pablo exhorte los Tesalonicenses a "trabajar con sus propias manos" sugiere algunas características de la comunidad cristiana en Tesalónica. Evidentemente, la comunidad de los tesalonicenses estaba compuesta en su mayoría por obreros. Si consideramos 1 Cor 4:11 literalmente, esta era también la clase social del apóstol Pablo. La evidencia de 2 Cor. 8:2-4 sugiere que la condición económica de los Tesalonicenses era pobre. Este pasaje confirma no sólo la condición política y la persecución en las iglesias de Macedonia, sino también su generosidad en comparación con sus posibilidades. La comunidad cristiana de los Tesalonicenses pertenece a la clase de los artesanos subalternos, los artesanos pobres, personas que lo más probable padecían cierto nivel de privación.⁸ A esta comunidad, en su contexto social, político, religioso y económico es que Pablo escribe su primera carta.

El **lenguaje** de 1 y 2 Tesalonicenses era muy común en el tiempo de Pablo. Comparte los rasgos y resultados de la literatura apocalíptica. La

5. R. Jewett, *Thessalonian Correspondence* p 93.

6. F. Lang, *TDNT* 7: 54-56; también W. Bauer, W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich and F. W. Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. 2nd Ed. Rev. & Enlg. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979) p 740.

7. Tal es la conclusión de Donfried, "Cults of Thessalonica" p 350. También de P. Rossano, *Lettere ai Tessalonicensi* (Italy: Marietti, 1965) p 103. Una opinión diferente la encontramos en H. Schlier, *El Apóstol y su comunidad: 1 Tesalonicenses, texto y comentario*. trad. Fernando Presa (Madrid: Ediciones Fax, 1974) p 92.

8. Néstor O. Míguez, "La composición social de la iglesia en Tesalónica," *Revista Bíblica* 51 Nueva Época 34 (1989): 65-66. Véase también R. Jewett, *Thessalonian Correspondence* p 121.

apocalíptica ha sido considerada la "madre de la teología cristiana."⁹ Esta declaración debe definirse en términos de su uso, significado y propósito en el contexto que produce este tipo de literatura. Esto es así porque en el contexto histórico de 1 Tesalonicenses el propósito específico es alentar e infundir valor en la comunidad. Esto puede verse en la doble referencia en 1 Tes 4:10 y 5:11: "Por consiguiente, alientense unos a otros (parakakeite allêous) con estas palabras" y "anímense unos a otros, y foralézcanse unos a otros." Este tipo de lenguaje apocalíptico llega a su máxima expresión en el contexto del movimiento social identificado como milenarianismo.¹⁰

La apocalíptica y su mensaje tienen su origen entre los grupos alienados por el sistema social dominante. Estos grupos alienados construyen el lenguaje apocalíptico como un sistema simbólico e ideológico alterno.¹¹ La literatura apocalíptica emerge en contextos de crisis tales como los referidos en 1 Tesalonicenses. En este contexto el lenguaje apocalíptico resulta ser ideal para expresar las frustraciones de los oprimidos y sus esperanzas de un nuevo futuro.¹² Pero el lenguaje apocalíptico no sólo habla de esperanza para el futuro. Tiene la consecuencia en sus seguidores de identidad grupal y praxis preservadora.¹³

Los movimientos milenaristas se caracterizan por las expectativas de una salvación inminente, la transformación del orden social presente, la liberación de energía emocional, reconocimiento de la brevedad de la existencia, y un papel

9. E. Käsemann, "On the Subject of Primitive Christian Apocalyptic" *New Testament Questions of Today* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969) pp. 108-137

10. Sobre este punto véase: C. A. Wanamaker, "Apocalypticism at Thessalonica." *Neotestamentica* 21 (1987): 1-10.

11. J. Severino Croato, "Apocalíptica y esperanza de los oprimidos (Contexto socio-político y cultural del género apocalíptico)." *Revista de Interpretación Bíblica Latino-Americana* 7 (1990): 9-24. Véase también P. D. Hanson, "Apocalyptic Literature." in *The Hebrew Bible and Its Modern Interpreters*. ed. Douglas A. Knight and Gene M. Tucker (Chico, California: Scholars Press, 1985) p 471. También es muy útil el estudio de Samuel Pagán, *Apocalipsis: Visión y misión*. (Editorial Caribe, 1993). El primer capítulo del libro de Samuel Pagán presenta una breve descripción de las características de la literatura apocalíptica. Lo dicho por Samuel Pagán en su libro sobre el Apocalipsis bien puede ser aplicado a la literatura paulina.

12. Croato, "Apocalíptica y esperanza," pp 13-14: "Para el que nada tiene (de bienes, felicidad, libertad) esta seguridad del fin favorable es generadora de esperanza y contribuye fuertemente a la constancia en la fe en medio de los sufrimientos. En las situaciones en que nacen, los textos apocalípticos no son evasivos, sino que conforman una literatura de resistencia de los oprimidos; no crean conflictos de lucha ofensiva contra los poderosos, pero sí una confrontación contrahegemónica en el plano ideológico que cohesiona al grupo, debilita al opresor, y ocasionalmente puede generar una defensa violenta."

13. W. A. Meeks, "Social Functions of Apocalyptic Language in Pauline Christianity," en *Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World and the Near East* (Proceeding of the International Colloquium on Apocalypticism, Upsala, August 12-17, 1979) editado por David Hellholm (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1983): 687-705.

central de un líder mesiánico, profético, o carismático.¹⁴ Estas características pueden ser encontradas en la literatura paulina.¹⁵

El marco teológico y sociológico del apóstol Pablo puede ser identificado como parte del movimiento milenario. Esta perspectiva puede ayudarnos a entender la conexión entre el lenguaje apocalíptico y el mensaje de esperanza de la primera carta a los Tesalonicenses. El lenguaje refuerza la unidad y solidaridad de la comunidad cristiana en Tesalónica, crea un sentido de identidad, y genera esperanza para el futuro, aun en medio de persecución.

El mejor ejemplo de lenguaje apocalíptico en 1 Tes está en la sección de 4:13-5:11. En esta sección Pablo trata el asunto de la esperanza cristiana en medio de circunstancias no placenteras. Este pasaje puede ser dividido en dos secciones, cada una bregando con un asunto específico: a) la suerte de los cristianos que han muerto, y b) el tiempo de la venida del Señor (parousía). El lenguaje paulino es altamente apocalíptico. En estas dos secciones Pablo contrasta la esperanza cristiana con la de "los otros que no tienen esperanza" (joi loipoí joi mē échontes elpída).

1 Tesalonicenses 4:13-18

Esta es la primera sección en la cual Pablo desarrolla un lenguaje explícitamente escatológico para instruir a los tesalonicenses acerca de su esperanza. Una declaración breve que presenta la misma perspectiva se encuentra en 1 Tes 1:9-10: "... cómo ustedes se convirtieron de los ídolos al Dios vivo y verdadero, y esperan a su Hijo desde los cielos, el cual resucitó de entre los muertos, Jesús, quien nos libra de la ira venidera." Es importante señalar que existe una íntima conexión entre la expectativa apocalíptica y la exhortación moral inmediata que refuerza el sentido de unidad y solidaridad de la comunidad.¹⁶

En el contexto de esta situación religiosa, social, política, y económica en que vivían los tesalonicenses, la comunidad cristiana emerge como la esperanza de los desesperanzados.¹⁷ La clase trabajadora de cristianos en Tesalónica es diferente a "los de afuera" (4:12) porque ellos tienen "esperanza" (4:13). Esta es una esperanza para los que viven, para los que "queden hasta la venida del Señor" (4:15), "nosotros los que vivimos" (4:17).

14. C. A. Wanamaker, "Apocalypticism at Thessalonica," *Neotestamentica* 21 (1987): 1-10.

15. En su comentario a la cartas a los Tesalonicenses, Wanamaker relaciona esta información con las cartas de Pablo. Menciona los siguientes elementos: (1) salvación inminente (1 Tes 1:9s; 1 Cor 7:29-31), (2) el orden social presente será transformado (Gal 6:14f.; Rom 8:18-23; 1 Cor. 7:29-31), (3) liberación de energía emocional (Gal 3:5; 1 Cor 12:4-11; 14:1-5), (4) brevedad de la presente existencia y (5) la figura central mesiánica con sus práctica y credos. Véase Wanamaker, *The Epistle to the Thessalonians*, p. 10.

16. Meeks, "Social Functions," p 694.

17. N. O. Míguez, "Para no quedar sin esperanza: La apocalíptica de Pablo en 1 Ts. como lenguaje de esperanza," *RIBLA* 7 (1990): 47.

En el contexto de dificultades, persecución, y aun muerte por causa de Cristo, los cristianos y las cristianas de Tesalónica saben que su futuro está seguro por la acción salvífica de Dios.¹⁸ Esto puede verse en los versos 16-17. En estos versos, el lenguaje de Pablo comparte los motivos apocalípticos de Daniel 7:2-3 y la literatura apocalíptica intertestamentaria.¹⁹ Los cristianos pueden consolarse porque la victoria final sobre esta situación está en las manos de Dios, y la garantía de este acto salvífico decisivo es la resurrección de Jesús (4:14). Esto no es hecho por medio del poder político, ni por meros esfuerzos humanos, sino por la acción de Dios. Quienes esperan sólo aflicción y persecución por causa de su fe, pueden tener esperanza en el futuro porque este no está en sus manos, ni siquiera en las manos de los perseguidores, sino en las manos de Dios. Esperar contra esperanza, es la esperanza de los desesperanzados.

1 Tesalonicenses 5:1-11

La segunda sección de esta instrucción apocalíptica es 1 Tes 5:1-11. Aquí Pablo habla del "cuándo" de la realización de esta esperanza.²⁰ Pero el lenguaje apocalíptico de esta sección no sólo sirve para hablar del tiempo de la venida del Señor, sino que también es una declaración de cómo los cristianos deben conducirse a la luz de esta esperanza.

Se presenta un claro contraste entre el lenguaje ideológico del imperio y la experiencia del los creyentes. El reclamo romano de "paz y seguridad" es visto como un reclamo engañoso.²¹ En contraste a este reclamo, los cristianos deben modelar su conducta de tal manera que llegue a ser una declaración anti-ideológica. Contra la imposición militar de "paz y seguridad," en respuesta a las persecuciones y la aflicción que sufren, los cristianos deben armarse de los instrumentos a mano para defenderse. Deben vestirse con la coraza (thōra) de la fe y el amor, y con el yelmo (perikefalān) de la esperanza de la salvación (5:8).

Confundiendo en la victoria final de Jesucristo, los cristianos puede renunciar a la violencia armada contra el opresor. Haciendo de la fe, la esperanza y el amor su armadura, pueden confrontar el engaño del opresor y demostrar el poder de su esperanza. De esta manera pueden poner a prueba su perspectiva y confianza en la intervención de Dios en la historia en la manifestación de Jesucristo.

18. Míguez, "Para no quedar sin esperanza," pp 51-52.

19. Salmos de Salomón 11:1; 1 Enoc 1:9; 2 Esdr 6:17-24 y 4 Esdr 13:1-13.

20. R. F. Collins, "Tradition, Redaction, and Exhortation in 1 Tes 4, 13-5,11," p 165. Véase, por ejemplo, 1 Enoch 62:1-5; el lenguaje de luz y tinieblas en 1QS 1:9-10; 3:13-4:26; 1QM; etc.

21. Este refrán fue utilizado por la propaganda ideológica de la Roma imperialista para justificar su dominio. Véase K. Wengst, *Pax Romana and the Peace of Jesus Christ* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987) pp 19-21 y 77-78.

Fe, Amor, y Esperanza

Como en 1 Tes 1:3, Pablo regresa a la triada de fe, amor, y esperanza en 5:8. En el primer caso (1:3) la fe es relacionada con la obra (tou érgou tēs pístēōs), el amor es relacionado con el trabajo (tou kótou tēs agapēs), y la esperanza es relacionada con la constancia o perseverancia (tēs jupomonēs tēs elpídos). Evidentemente esta no es una perspectiva escapista que toma la fe religiosa como una excusa para no cumplir con sus responsabilidades. En 1 Tes 5:8 el contexto nos dice que el uso paulino de esta triada tiene el mismo efecto. La esperanza cristiana en el triunfo escatológico de su fe tiene que ser la base, no la excusa, para un esfuerzo para nueva vida. Viviendo esta nueva vida, este nuevo estilo de vida, la comunidad no sólo anuncia su fe, sino que hace realidad, construye, la nueva edad. Viviendo a la sombra de la futura resurrección, convencidos del triunfo final de Dios, de la vida sobre la muerte, los cristianos no sólo anuncian, sino que hacen realidad los beneficios de su esperanza aquí y ahora.

El lenguaje apocalíptico representa un lenguaje de esperanza en doble sentido. En primer lugar, como hemos visto, la literatura apocalíptica se desarrolla desde una perspectiva de pueblo en lucha. En este sentido, esta esperanza y lenguaje religioso es esperanza de los desesperanzados. Es lenguaje de esperanza que surge como contra-lenguaje, un lenguaje que se origina como experiencia de alienación pero que se mueve para encontrar sentido en otro universo simbólico e ideológico. En este primer sentido, la apocalíptica es esperanza de los desesperanzados.

El segundo sentido en el cual el lenguaje apocalíptico es la esperanza de los desesperanzados es que sirve como medio para fomentar la esperanza para los que están en aflicción. El lenguaje apocalíptico sirve como fuerza simbólica que expresa esperanza en medio de incertidumbre. En una situación como la de Tesalónica (de pobreza, aflicción, persecución, y aun muerte), se puede preguntar si vale la pena ser cristiano. En contraste al reclamo romano de *Pax et Securitas*, la respuesta cristiana a esta situación es que hay esperanza real en el triunfo final de Dios.

La pregunta fundamental de la apocalíptica es: ¿A quién le pertenece la soberanía del mundo?²² La respuesta a esta pregunta en 1 Tesalonicenses es clara. La soberanía del mundo le pertenece a Dios, quien levantó de los muertos a Jesús, quien nos dará la victoria final. Porque creemos en el poder de la resurrección de Jesús, podemos permanecer mirando hacia el futuro, obrando en fe, trabajando en amor, y perseverando en la esperanza. Esto no es porque tengamos confianza en nuestras propias fuerzas, sino porque confiamos en el Señor de la historia.

Podrá haber sombras en el camino. Nuevos mártires pueden ser añadidos a la lista de los que buscan la paz y la justicia. Pero un día veremos abiertos los

22. E. Käsemann, "On the Subject of Primitive Christian Apocalyptic," p 136.

cielos, veremos al Señor venir en las nubes, nos reuniremos y estaremos con él para siempre.

El mensaje de esperanza de la primera carta a los Tesalonicenses bien puede ser afirmado por la comunidad latina en Estados Unidos y otras partes del mundo. Esta comunidad latina se encuentra en la encrucijada de dos culturas y dos historias. Lenguaje que afirma la confianza y esperanza en la intervención divina a nivel personal y comunitario. Nuestra comunidad puede reclamar el mensaje apocalíptico que sirve de motivación para la acción significativa para afirmar nuestra fe y valores. Lenguaje de protesta contra las circunstancias alienantes; lenguaje de compromiso para la acción de amor, fe, y esperanza; y lenguaje motivador que recuerda que la victoria de la comunidad cristiana que sufre está garantizada por la resurrección de Cristo de entre los muertos.

Summary

Although an apocalyptic perspective and language have often been considered alienating and escapist, the opposite is true in Paul's use of such language and perspective in 1 Thessalonians. When one takes into account the social composition of the Christian community in that city, and the pressures under which it was operating, it is clear that in this case apocalyptic language serves as a counter-language, opposing a perspective which would lead to defeatism. Through apocalyptic language, Paul reminds his readers that the final word is not up to the powers that now confine and oppress them. This is a liberating word to a community which sees very little hope of immediate relief in the social order in which it lives. The way Paul uses apocalypticism, it leads not to complacency nor to escapism, but rather to hope and commitment. As the article says, "hoping against hope: that is the hope of those who have none."

Reseña Bibliográfica

Eldin Villafañe, *The Liberating Spirit: Toward An Hispanic American Social Ethic*. (Lanham: University Press of America, 1992), 257 pp.

Luis A. Pérez

"The Liberating Spirit..." is, without a doubt, a wonderful analysis of the Hispanic Pentecostal ethos. It has been a stimulating addition to my hectic schedule as an organizing pastor of a new community of faith. In fact, Villafañe has helped me put some perspective into my own religious history. It has helped me look at, from afar and yet so close, my own religious experience in the Pentecostal community.

In reading "The Liberating Spirit..." I have come to a greater appreciation of my Pentecostal rootedness. The reading has sprung wells of hopefulness that as Pentecostalism matures its genius, fire, and passion will be appropriated by the

larger mainline community. Reading this exposition of the religious community of my childhood has brought together some of my fondest memories of my Pentecostal past. A past unequivocally instrumental in molding a significant chunk of my clay of life.

In response to my reading, I have returned to the "campaña evangelística" in which I made my first decision for Christ, where I first heard the gospel message become as real as the decibels from the organ at the event back in 1971. In this outstanding critique of one of the most misunderstood sects (a "sect" in the sense that it exhibits a penchant for a rejection of the values of a dominant social and/or religious culture) in the U.S., Dr. Villafañe challenges the dominant religious community to understand Hispanic Pentecostalism for what it is: a socio-religious North American phenomenon and a place in which many of us have found meaning in the Kingdom as members of the periphery.

Though my simplified version of Dr. Villafañe's thorough analysis of modern Pentecostalism may be incomplete, it can be safely assumed that his fundamental premise about the community lies in the incontrovertible reality that the birth of Pentecostalism (and the "Latino version") can be traced to, in large measure, the following: 1) existence of social forces beyond its control (i.e., the advent of the industrial revolution and the inevitable decay of cultural and social structures held dear by the disempowered and disenfranchised, 2) the unique characteristics of the Hispanic ethos itself (i.e., a stress on "comunidad" versus individualism; and a community characterized by a penchant for cultural and linguistic identity), 3) the appropriation of the gospel as an act of liberation, as well as communal and individual cohesion amidst disintegration.

The author, himself a by-product of Pentecostal up-bringing, makes quite clear --but without romanticizing-- his love for the community. Though he attempts (rather successfully, I might add) to be as intellectually objective as he can about the subject matter at hand (it is a book that will be invariably criticized by the pietists as well as the activists among Evangelical Protestant circles), he does not hide his profound appreciation for the faith of his childhood. It is, after all, the community that has been greatly instrumental in shaping his own life and ministry.

I applaud the book and believe it will serve as a primer and resource for those who care to learn what it means to be an "aleluya," a member of the Pentecostal community. Dr. Villafañe speaks with authority about the tradition of my youth and makes no apology for calling Hispanic Pentecostals to a reanalysis of their failure to be truly a community empowered by the Spirit. "The Liberating Spirit..." is must reading, especially for those of us who take seriously Hispanic popular religious movements --movements that in most cases have truly taken us seriously.

My primary critique about "The Liberating Spirit..." is that it appears to me very little has been said about the issue of machismo/sexism so prevalent in the Pentecostal community. On this matter, I was expecting more but did not get it. I was hoping that a book on social ethics would address this concern head-on,

but it never came. On several occasions machismo is addressed in a cursory fashion but not in a manner worthy of, say, a section of a chapter. This is unfortunate. Perhaps this is a matter beyond the scope of a book dedicated to "social ethics" or perhaps some of us who have become members of the religious elite (and who come from Pentecostal backgrounds) are still unwilling to speak of this disease and call it what it is --sin. It is sin because machismo in the church is inconsistent with what it means to be active participants of God's new Kingdom in Jesus Christ. I truly expected more.

This perturbs me because it is my belief that despite the beauty of the community my experience within it proves to me that it is also a perfect caldron for the perpetuation of behavior of exclusion. What I mean by "perfect caldron" is that some expressions of Hispanic Pentecostalism (and the same can be said of other forms of Pentecostal expressions) have a tendency to legitimize the exclusion of women in the guise of biblical hermeneutics and in the name of "la cultura"--two of the most useful ingredients for evoking misogynist patterns of behavior in the name of the One who has called all men and women to freedom in Jesus Christ (Gal. 3:25-28).

Perhaps I feel strongly about this matter because I have personally witnessed machismo rape the dignity of many of my "hermanas." If there is a reason why my own three sisters today are not committed participants of any community of faith, I attribute that partly to their own experiences "en la iglesia Pentecostal." For too long I have seen women excluded and ostracized by a largely male clergy. On more than one occasion I have witnessed women shamed by my brothers because they dared to challenge silly notions of dress and personal attire. "Disciplina," the practice of local church discipline, and quite common in fundamentalist and pietist circles, has always been a largely male activity and a method of keeping "la mujer bajo control." It is overwhelmingly women (particularly single women) the recipients of such a communal form of control.

Is it possible that this is the case in Hispanic Pentecostal circles (and similar religious environments) because the overwhelming majority of pastors and leaders in power and authority are men themselves? I think so. This will end the day when women become intentionally equal partners in the proclamation of "las buenas nuevas de salvación." It is my critique that much of Hispanic Pentecostalism offers a perfect place ripe for the open, and often public, exclusion of women from the most significant positions in the life and mission of the church (with some exceptions, of course).

Though, certainly, more could have been said beyond having been confessed on more than one occasion that Pentecostalism does not negate the presence of machismo, overall, Dr. Villafañe has done a superb job in helping us recoup a sense of pride in the "comunidad Pentecostal." For that, I am forever grateful to him and "The Liberating Spirit" Again, from my perspective, it is must reading.

